

And a scrippe of faine Distresse,
That ful was of elengenesse,
And forth she walked sobrelly:
And false Semblant saynt, je vous die,
Had, as it were for such mistere,
Don on the cope of a frere,
With chere simple, and ful pitous;
His looking was not disdeinous,
Ne proud, but meke and ful pesible.
About his nekke he bar a bible,
And squierly forth gan he gon;
And, for to reste his limmes upon,
He had of Treson a potente;
As he were feble, his way he wente.
But in his sleve he gan to thringe
A rasour sharp, and wel bytinge,
That was forged in a forge,
Which that men clepen Coupegorge.

SO longe forth hir way they nomen,
Til they to Wicked Tonge comen,
That at his gate was sitting,
And saw folk in the way passing.
The pilgrimes saw he faste by,
That beren hem ful mekely,
And humbly they with him mette.
Dame Abstinence first him grette,
And sith him false Semblant salued,
And he hem; but he not remued,
For he ne dredde hem not a del.
For when he saw hir faces wel,
Alway in herte him thoughte so,
He shulde knowe hem bothe two;
For wel he knew Dame Abstinence,
But he ne knew not Constreynance.
He knew nat that she was constrayned,
Ne of her theves lyfe feyned,
But wende she com of wil al free;
But she com in another degree;
And if of good wil she began,
That wil was failed her as than.

AND fals Semblant had he seyn als,
But he knew nat that he was fals.
Yet fals was he, but his falsnesse
Ne coude he not espye, nor gesse;
For semblant was so slye wrought,
That falsnesse he ne espyed nought.
But haddest thou knowen him biforn,
Thou woldest on a boke have sworn,
Whan thou him saugh in thilke aray
That he, that whylom was so gay,
And of the daunce Joly Robin,
Was tho become a Jacobin.
But sothely, what so men him calle,
Freres Prechours been good men alle;
Hir order wickedly they beren,
Suche minstrelles if that they weren.
So been Hugustins and Cordileres,
And Carmes, and eek Sakked freres,
And alle freres, shodde and bare,
(Though some of hem ben grete and square),
ful holy men, as I hem deme;

Everich of hem wolde good man seme,
But shalt thou never of apparence
Seen conclude good consequence
In none argument, ywis,
If existence al failed is.
For men may finde alway sophyme
The consequence to envenyme,
Whoso that hath the subteltee
The double sentence for to see.

WHAN the pilgrimes comen were
there,
To Wicked Tonge, that dwelled

hir harnais nigh hem was algate;
By Wicked Tonge adoun they sate,
That bad hem ner him for to come,
And of tydings telle him some,
And sayde hem: What cas maketh yow
To come into this place now?

SIR, seyde Strained Abstinence,
We, for to drye our penaunce,
With hertes pitous and devoute,
Hre comen, as pilgrimes gon aboute;
Wel nigh on fote alway we go;
ful dusty been our heles two;
And thus bothe we ben sent
Thurghout this world that is miswent,
To yewe ensample, and preche also,
To fisshen sinful men we go,
for other fisshing ne fasshe we.
And, sir, for that charitee,
As we be wont, herberwe we crave,
Your lyf to amende; Crist it save!
And, so it shulde you nat displese,
We wolden, if it were your ese,
A short sermoun unto you seyn.
And Wicked Tonge answerde ageyn:
The hous, quod he, such as ye see,
Shal nat be warned you for me,
Sey what you list, and I wol here.
Graunt mercy, swete sire dere!
Quod alderfirst Dame Abstinence,
And thus began she hir sentence:
Constreyned Abstinence.

SIR, the first vertue, certeyn,
The gretest, and most sovereyn
That may be founde in any man,
for having, or for wit he can,
That is, his tonge to refreyne;
Therto ought every wight him peyne.
for it is better stille be
Than for to speken harm, pardee!
And he that herkeneth it gladly,
He is no good man, sikerly.
And, sir, aboven al other sinne,
In that art thou most gilty inne.
Thou spake a jape not long ago,
And, sir, that was right yvel do,
Of a yong man that here repaired,
And never yet this place apaired.
Thou seydest he awaited nothing
But to discyve fair Welcoming.
Ye seyde nothing sooth of that;

But, sir, ye lye; I tell you plat;
He ne cometh no more, ne goth, pardee!
I trow ye shal him never see.
Welcoming in prison is,
That ofte hath pleyed with you, er this,
The fairest games that he coude,
Without filthe, stille or loude;
Now dar he nat himself solace.
Ye han also the man do chace,
That he dar neither come ne go.
What meveth you to hate him so
But properly your wikked thought,
That many a fals lesing hath thought?
That meveth your foole eloquence,
That jangleth ever in audience,
And on the folk areyseth blame,
And doth hem dishonour and shame,
for thing that may have no preving,
But lyknesse, and contriving.
for I dar seyn, that Reson demeth,
It is not al sooth thing that semeth,
It is sinne to controve
Thing that is for to reprove;
This wot ye wel; and, sir, therefore
Ye am to blame wel the more.
And, nathelesse, he reketh lyte;
He yeveth nat now thereof a myte;
for if he thoughte harm, parfay,
He wolde come and gon al day;
He coude himselfe nat abstene.
Now cometh he nat, and that is sene,
for he ne taketh of it no cure,
But if it be through aventure,
And lasse than other folk, algate.
And thou here watchest at the gate,
With spere in thyme arest alway;
There muse, musard, al the day.
Thou wakest night and day for thought;
Ywis, thy travayl is for nought.
And jelousye, withouten faile,
Shal never quyte thee thy travaille.
And seethe is, that fair Welcoming,
Withouten any trespassing,
Shal wrongfully in prison be,
Ther wepeth and languissbeth he.
And though thou never yet, ywis,
Agiltest man no more but this,
Take not agreef, it were worthy
To putte thee out of this baily,
And afterward in prison lye,
And fettre thee til that thou dye;
for thou shalt for this sinne dwelle
Right in the devils ers of helle,
But if that thou repente thee.

Now! I say, thou lyste falsly! quod he.
What? welcome with mischaunce
now!
have I therefore herbered you
To seye me shame, and eek reprove?
With sory happe, to your bihove,
Am I today your herberger?
Go, herber you elleswhere than here,

That han a lyer called me!
Two tregetours art thou and he,
That in myn hous do me this shame,
And for my sothsawe ye me blame.
Is this the sermoun that ye make?
To alle the develles I me take,
Or elles, God, thou me confounde!
But er men diden this castel founde,
It passeth not ten dayes or twelve,
But it was told right to myselve,
And as they seide, right so tolde I,
He kiste the Rose privily!
Thus seide I now, and have seid yore;
I not wher he dide any more.
Why shulde men sey me such a thing,
If it hadde been gabbing?
Right so seide I, and wol seye yit;
I trowe, I lyed not of it;
And with my bemes I wol blowe
To alle neighboris a rowe,
How he hath bothe comen and gon.
WHOU spak fals Semblant right
anon,
Al is not gospel, out of doute,
That men seyn in the toune aboute;
Ley no deef ere to my speking;
I swere yow, sir, it is gabbing!
I trowe ye wot wel certeynly,
That no man loveth him tenderly
That seith him harm, if he wot it,
Al be he never so pore of wit.
And sooth is also sikerly,
This knowe ye, sir, as wel as I,
That lovers gladly wol visyten
The places ther hir loves habytyn.
This man you loveth and eek honoureth;
This man to serve you laboureth;
And clepeth you his freend so dere,
And this man maketh you good chere,
And everywher that he you meteth,
He you saleweth, and he you greteth.
He preseth not so ofte, that ye
Ought of his come encombred be;
Ther presen other folk on yow
ful ofter than that he doth now.
And if his herte him streyned so
Unto the Rose for to go,
Ye shulde him seen so ofte nede,
That ye shulde take him with the dede.
He coude his coming not forbere,
Though ye him thrilled with a spere;
It nere not thanne as it is now.
But trusteth wel, I swere it yow,
That it is clene out of his thought.
Sir, certes, he ne thenketh it nought;
No more ne doth fair Welcoming,
That sore abyeth al this thing.
And if they were of oon assent,
ful sone were the Rose hent;
The maugre youres wolde be.
And sir, of o thing herkeneth me:
Sith ye this man, that loveth yow,